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UPDATE ON HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT RESIDENTS OF NORTH CAROLINA'S HEALTH SERVICE AREAS

The North Carolina Citizen Survey (NCCS) is a sample survey conducted by the North Carolina Division of State Budget and Management in order to provide data regarding demographic, health, economic, personal opinion and other characteristics of the state's household population. The survey has been conducted during September and October of each year since 1976. In addition, for the last two years, a spring survey has been conducted.

The present report attempts to highlight results of health-related questions from the Fall 1979 survey for adults and households in North Carolina and in the state's six Health Service Areas (HSA's). In addition, where appropriate and where comparable questions were asked, results from earlier surveys are examined.

Details concerning the 1976 and 1977 survey design and methodology have been reported (1-4). A stratified random sample with proportional allocation was selected from the prior year's state income tax returns and listings of residents eligible for Medicaid assistance. After elimination of duplicate household listings, a cross-section of adults was then questioned by telephone, in person, or through a mail survey. Design and methodology for the 1978 and 1979 surveys were essentially the same as in previous years. The 1979 sampling frame included 93 percent of the estimated households in 1978, while the 1978 frame consisted of 87 percent of the 1977 estimate. The final sample for the 1979 and 1978 surveys contained 1,394 and 1,391 households, respectively, each household having one respondent aged 18 or over (5). Sample sizes for HSA's for each year 1976-79 are given in Table I.

The representativeness of the 1976 and 1977 samples has also been discussed (1-4). Generally, differences between estimates obtained in the surveys and those from independent sources are not large, but small differences in variables such as rurality, sex and age exist. Due to a change in definitions, urban-rural estimates from the 1976 survey are not comparable to those obtained in subsequent NCCS surveys. This factor is probably responsible for the apparent overrepresentation of urban households in the 1976 survey, while the other surveys tend to be biased towards rurality. In all but the 1979 sample, males appear underrepresented, while in all samples, adults aged 18-29 appear underrepresented and middle-aged adults appear overrepresented to varying degrees.

Population Characteristics

Differences in demographic composition contribute to differences among health characteristics of the six HSA's. The 1979 survey included proportionately more non-whites in the Capital, Cardinal and Eastern HSA's, higher percentages of rural as well as low-income households in the Western, Cardinal and Eastern HSA's and a greater percentage of females in the Piedmont.

Chronic Health Problems

For HSA's and each of four survey years, Table I shows the percentages of sampled adults by type of diagnosed chronic disease. For nearly every disease category, the